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ABSTRACT

Although "Othello" has been one of William Shakespeare's most popular plays, its performance history has been marked with risk and tension because of the play's focus on racial prejudice, gender conflict, and sexuality. The controversies surrounding conflicting attitudes toward race and religion, love and marriage, and war and the military in Shakespeare's time are reflected in the tragic plot and thematic ambiguities of "Othello." This interdisciplinary casebook is designed to help students and their teachers explore the historical and modern issues related to the play. By combining primary documents with commentary, the casebook considers many theatrical, cultural, social, and political concerns at the core of "Othello." The casebook's primary documents include excerpts from Renaissance travel journals, Elizabethan marriage and military conduct books, dramatic criticism and actors' journals, and recent newspaper articles and editorials relating to the trials of O.J. Simpson and the Unabomber. Chapters in the casebook are: Preface; Introduction; Dramatic Analysis; Historical Context: Race and Religion; Historical Context: Love and Marriage; Historical Context: War and the Military; Performance and Interpretation; and Contemporary Applications. Numerous suggestions for written assignments, oral discussion, and further readings offer additional practical and creative ideas for examining the diverse topics of "Othello." (NKA)

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